

CODEPENDENCY WORKSHOP

You Didn't Cause It, You Can't Control It, You Can't Cure It

Facilitated by Merlene Bishop, M.A.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

On completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the disease of addiction
- Understand the effects of addiction on the family
- Recognize how family and friends enable the addicted person
- Develop a plan of action for changing your behaviors regarding the addicted person
- Learn "Tough Love" strategies for dealing with the addictive behavior
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Confidentiality is an important component of this course

**Who I see here
What I hear here
Stays here when I leave**

SESSION I

The Disease of Addiction

The Definition of Addiction

Common Behaviors of Addicted Persons

Walls of Defense of the Addicted person

THE DEFINITION OF ADDICTION

**With
Alcohol and other drugs
Repeated
Trouble**

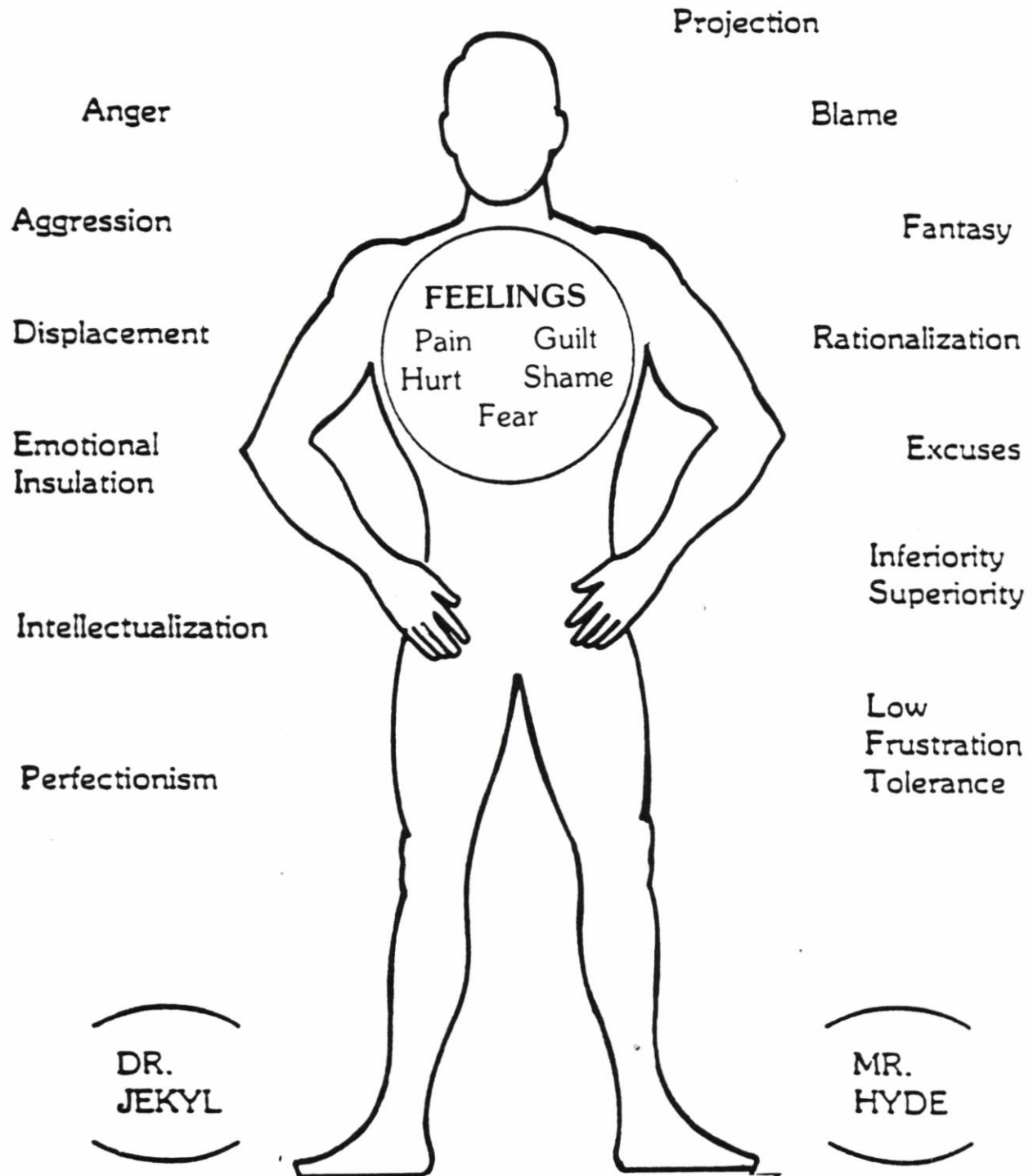
These repeated troubles can happen in any area of a person's life:

Legal
Social
Family
Workplace
School
Finances

The drug of choice is not as important as the problems resulting from it's use. Addiction is a primary, chronic, progressive disease with it's own symptoms. There is no cure, but it can be arrested by treatment and life-long abstinence, better known as *recovery*.

- Addiction is an illness that a person cannot control and does not recognize as a problem.
- Addiction causes repeated problems in a person's life
- These problems make the person appear uncaring, dishonest and irresponsible.
- Alcohol or other drugs are viewed as necessary and important by the addicted person.
- Every person abusing drugs and/or alcohol share common behaviors that become more exaggerated as the illness progresses.
- Every addicted person attempts to rationalize and minimize their problems.
- These behaviors are called defenses; The following page is an outline of the defenses used by alcohol and other drug addicts.

Walls of Defenses of the Chemically Dependent Person



SESSION II

How Enabling Supports The Disease

- Inappropriate behavior on the part of loved ones allows addiction to continue. Any behavior that makes it easier for the addicted person to continue drinking/using, or allows them to escape the consequences for their behavior is considered **enabling**. Enabling can take many forms. the following is a list of examples:
 - Calling the addicted person's workplace, making excuses for them when they are unable to attend when high or hungover.
 - Making excuses for that person to the children when they have he/she has a hangover: "Don't bother Daddy/Mommy, he/she is sick".
 - Making excuses to friends/family members when the addicted person fails to live up to their promises or commitments.
 - Buying alcohol for the alcoholic, or driving them to buy it.
 - Bailing the person out of jail, or in some way getting them out of difficult situations caused by their alcohol/drug use.
 - Riding in a vehicle with the addict when he/she is drunk or high.
 - Covering up the problems caused in the family by the addict's use.
- Telling yourself that the situation or the addict's behavior is "not that bad" when they are not drinking or using. This is called *Denial*.

Enablers are obsessed with the behavior of the addicted person, and they get caught up in trying to control that behavior. Enabling is a reaction to the addiction and allows the enabler to avoid focusing on their own behavior and how they are contributing to the problem. The reactive behavior draws attention away from the primary problem of addiction.



SESSION III

HOW ADDICTION AFFECTS THE FAMILY

A family is a system, and each person is a part of a whole *affected by it's parts*. If you have lived in a family with an addicted person, you have seen that person's values and morals decline; They have lied to you, broken promises, made a mess of the family finances, perhaps even been verbally and physically abusive. As a result, you have felt angry, confused, resentful, unappreciated, and hurt.

But there is another side to the effects of addiction that you may not know about that is called **codependency**. Every family that has an addicted person in it has become codependent. There are certain behaviors common to all addictive or codependent families that can be characterized by certain defense mechanisms or survival rules; And defense mechanisms as survival **roles** played by all family members.

RULES OF THE ADDICTIVE FAMILY SYSTEM

- **Don't Talk:** Addictive families don't talk about the problem, they don't talk about *any* problems, period. They avoid talking about the latest problem caused by the addicted person: everyone walks on eggs to avoid making that person angry or upset.
- **Don't Trust :** Because addictive families have learned mistrust from the broken promises, irresponsible behaviors, and lying of the addicted person, they learn to distrust everyone, and especially their own feelings.
- **Don't Feel:** Addictive families have a lot of pain and anger that they can't talk about openly, even to each other. They learn to shut themselves off from their feelings, and eventually become numb to most feelings altogether, except anger.
- **Don't Rock The Boat:** Eventually most family members learn to go along with the unwritten rule of not upsetting the status quo; Everyone's attention revolves around the needs of the addicted person. No one speaks about the problem outside the family, and everyone is silently awaiting the next crisis.

Codependency Checklist

1. ___ My good feelings about who I am stem from being liked by others.
2. ___ My good feelings about who I am stem from receiving approval from others.
3. ___ I allow other people's problems to affect my serenity. My mental attention is often focused on solving their problems or relieving their pain.
4. ___ My mental attention is usually focused on pleasing others. I feel better about myself when I please others.
5. ___ My attention is usually focused on helping others realize that I know better than they know what is best for them.
6. ___ My focus is on protecting others.
7. ___ My self-esteem is bolstered by solving other problems or relieving their pain.
8. ___ I relinquish my hobbies and interests to become involved in the hobbies and interests of others.
9. ___ I spend my leisure time pleasing and helping others.
10. ___ The appearance of others close to me is a reflection of me.
11. ___ The behavior of people in close relationship to me is important because I think they are a reflection of me.
12. ___ I am seldom aware of how I feel, but usually I think I know how others feel.
13. ___ I show more concern about what others want than about what I want.
14. ___ The dreams I have for my future are linked to others.
15. ___ My fears, anger, and rejection often determines what I say and do.
16. ___ I use giving as a way of securing relationships.
17. ___ My social circle diminishes as I become involved in a close relationship.
18. ___ I put my values aside to maintain relationships.
19. ___ I respect others' opinions and way of doing things more than I do my own

Use this checklist only to increase your own level of awareness about codependency.

DEFINITIONS OF CODEPENDENCY

- *Self-defeating learned behaviors that result in a diminished capacity to initiate or participate in loving relationships.**
- *The fallacy of trying to control feelings (internal) by trying to control people, things and events (external).**
- *One who is obsessed with controlling the behavior of others.**
- *People who accept responsibility for someone else's behavior.**

**Codependents experience distorted thinking and
painful feelings most of the time.**

CO-DEPENDENT CHARACTERISTICS

A Need to control - They are constantly trying to control people and situations. They attempt to manage the lives of everyone, especially the addicted person. The more out of control *their* life is, the more desperate their control efforts become.

Caretaking - Codependents get their sense of self worth and identity from meeting the needs of others in situations where people are capable of meeting their own needs and taking care of themselves.

Martyrdom - codependents can endure years of suffering to save a marriage, keep the family together, or keeping the addicted person from harm or embarrassment. They will go to any lengths to keep the addict (and others) from experiencing the consequences of their behavior.

Being Out of Touch With Self - Codependents are so preoccupied with attempts to manage others' lives that they lose an awareness of their own feelings and needs. They don't allow themselves to have many good feelings, they even repress anger and resentment when it becomes too painful. As they progressively deny their own needs, they often become depressed and have a generalized sense of hopelessness.

*The consequences of these behaviors are that they allow others to dictate their behavior and decisions; They lose sight of who they really are, what they value, what their needs are and what they want to accomplish with their lives.

*The good news is that these behaviors can be changed, and the painful feelings and distorted thinking of codependency can be healed.

II. Common Traits of codependency behavior:

1. Distorted Thinking:

*I am responsible for his/her feelings, thoughts, choices and well-being.

*What I want and need is unimportant.

*It is shameful and a sign of failure to admit I have problems.

* If I am honest about my feelings, people will reject me.

*If I just try harder, he/she (or the addicted person) will feel better, act better, be better (if an addict, they will stop drinking/using).

*My situation feels impossible and hopeless, and I feel trapped. I have no choices.

2. Painful Feelings:

*Guilt

*Anger (often not expressed, stuffed inside).

*Explosive some of the time.

* Sad, depressed, empty, feeling unappreciated.

*Afraid, anxious, worried

* Ashamed and embarrassed about the addict's behaviors.

3. Common Behaviors:

*Enabling

*Controlling

*Caretaking (as opposed to caring *for*)

*Fixing

*Making excuses for the addicted person

Roles of the Addictive Family

- **Enabler:**

Makes excuses for addicted person's behavior

Tries to control their behavior, alcohol/drug abuse

Consistently nagging, pleading with the other person to change

Constantly obsessing with the other's behavior and substance use

- **Coping Mechanisms:**

Denial, delusion, accepting responsibility for other people's behaviors;

Losing their sense of self by reacting to life as determined by other people's opinions, feelings, behaviors.

- **Family Hero**

Usually the oldest child; Constantly trying to fix things in the family, caretaking others, especially the Enabler. Often an achiever in school or extra-curricular activities; Payoff for this: bringing esteem to the family, temporarily relieving family anxiety and pain. Always super-responsible, hence gets an inappropriate amount of responsibility dumped on them. Family views them as "The Little Adult".

- **Scapegoat**

This child is consistently getting into trouble, in the family, the school system, and when older, often in the juvenile justice system. Their behavior is a defense mechanism in the form of rebellion against the rigid family rules. They draw attention away from the problems of the family, and everyone can focus on the problems of this child, avoiding the *real* problem of substance abuse.

- **Mascot**

The Mascot is the family clown, always being cute and funny, trying to make people laugh. They are also often hyperactive, as a response to the anxiety they sense in the family. Their role is to ease the pain and tension of the family. They grow up with an under-responsible attitude about life, not taking anything seriously. This is the Mascot's defense mechanism in order to avoid feeling and facing pain.

- **Lost Child**

The Lost Child is often the last child born in the family, when the other family members are already caught up in their dysfunctional roles. He/she doesn't see a place for themselves in the overall script, so they become invisible. Their defense mechanisms are always being the "good, quiet kid", who loses him/herself in solitary activities. They spend

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RULES OF THE DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILY

- *It's not O.K. to talk about problems**
- *Feelings shouldn't be expressed openly**
- *Triangulation-one person acting as a messenger between two others**
- *Be strong, be good, be right, be perfect**
- *Make us proud**
- *Don't be selfish**
- *Do as I say, not as I do**
- *It's not O.K. to play or be playful**
- *Don't rock the boat**

THE HEALTHY FAMILY

- *Communicates and listens**
- *Affirms and supports one another**
- *Teaches respect for others**
- *Develops a sense of trust**
- *Has a sense of play and humor**
- *Exhibits a sense of shared responsibility**
- *Teaches a sense of right and wrong**
- *Has a strong sense of family in which rituals and traditions abound**
- *Has a balanced interaction among members**
- *Has a shared religious core**
- *Respects the privacy of one another**
- *Values service to others**
- *Fosters mealtime conversations**
- *Shares leisure time**
- *Admits to and seeks help with problems**